

S.61

An act relating to offenders with mental illness

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 13 V.S.A. § 4820 is amended to read:

§ 4820. HEARING REGARDING COMMITMENT

(a) The court before which a person is tried or is to be tried for a criminal offense shall hold a hearing for the purpose of determining whether the person should be committed to the custody of the Commissioner of Mental Health or, as provided in 18 V.S.A. chapter 206, to the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, if the person is charged on information, complaint, or indictment with the offense and:

(1) is reported by the examining psychiatrist following examination pursuant to sections 4814–4816 of this title to have been insane at the time of the alleged offense;

(2) is found upon hearing pursuant to section 4817 of this title to be incompetent to stand trial due to a mental illness, ~~intellectual~~ developmental disability, or traumatic brain injury;

(3) is not indicted upon hearing by grand jury by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense, duly certified to the court; or

(4) upon trial by court or jury is acquitted by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense.

(b) A person subject to a hearing under subsection (a) of this section may be confined in jail or some other suitable place by order of the court pending hearing for a period not exceeding 15 days.

(c) For a person who is found upon hearing pursuant to section 4817 of this title to be incompetent to stand trial due to mental illness or developmental disability, the court shall appoint counsel from the Mental Health Law Project to represent the person who is the subject of the proceedings and from the Office of the Attorney General to represent the State in the proceedings.

Sec. 2. 13 V.S.A. § 4821 is amended to read:

§ 4821. NOTICE OF HEARING; PROCEDURES

The person who is the subject of the proceedings, his or her attorney, the legal guardian, if any, the Commissioner of Mental Health or the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, and the ~~State's Attorney or other prosecuting officer representing~~ counsel appointed pursuant to subsection 4820(c) of this title to represent the State in the case, shall be given notice of the time and place of a hearing under 4820 of this title.

Procedures for hearings for persons who are mentally ill shall be as provided in 18 V.S.A. chapter 181. Procedures for hearings for persons who are intellectually disabled or have a traumatic brain injury shall be as provided in 18 V.S.A. chapter 206, subchapter 3.

Sec. 3. 28 V.S.A. § 3 is amended to read:

§ 3. GENERAL DEFINITIONS

As used in this title:

* * *

(12) Despite other names this concept has been given in the past or may be given in the future, “segregation” means a form of separation from the general population that may or may not include placement in a single occupancy cell and that is used for disciplinary, administrative, or other reasons, but shall not mean confinement to an infirmary or a residential treatment setting for purposes of evaluation, treatment, or provision of services.

Sec. 4. 28 V.S.A. § 701a(b) is amended to read:

~~(b) For purposes of this title, and despite other names this concept has been given in the past or may be given in the future, “segregation” means a form of separation from the general population which may or may not include placement in a single occupancy cell and which is used for disciplinary, administrative, or other reasons~~ As used in this section, “segregation” shall have the same meaning as in subdivision 3(12) of this title.

Sec. 5. 28 V.S.A. § 907 is amended to read:

§ 907. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE FOR INMATES; POWERS AND
RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner shall administer a program of trauma-informed mental health services which shall be available to all inmates and shall provide adequate staff to support the program. The program shall provide the following services:

(1)(A) Within 24 hours of admittance to a correctional facility, all inmates shall be screened for any signs of mental illness, ~~mental condition or~~, psychiatric disability or disorder, or serious functional impairment. If as a result of the screening it is determined that the inmate is receiving services under the developmental disabilities home and ~~community-based~~ community-based services waiver or is currently receiving community rehabilitation and treatment services, he or she will automatically be designated as having a serious functional impairment.

(B) Every inmate who is identified as a result of screening by a mental health professional as requiring inpatient evaluation, treatment, or services shall, within 24 hours of the screening, be referred for such treatment, evaluation, or services in a setting appropriate to the clinical needs of the inmate.

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Sec. 6. 28 V.S.A. § 907 is amended to read:

§ 907. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE FOR INMATES; POWERS AND
RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner shall administer a program of trauma-informed mental health services ~~which~~ that shall be available to all inmates and shall provide adequate staff to support the program. The program shall provide the following services:

(1)(A) Within 24 hours of admittance to a correctional facility, all inmates shall be screened for any signs of mental illness, mental condition, psychiatric disability or disorder, or serious functional impairment. If as a result of the screening it is determined that the inmate is receiving services under the developmental disabilities home and ~~community-based~~ community-based services waiver or is currently receiving community rehabilitation and treatment services, he or she will automatically be designated as having a serious functional impairment.

(B) Every inmate who is identified as a result of screening by a mental health professional as requiring inpatient evaluation, treatment, or services shall, within ~~24~~ 48 hours of the screening, be ~~referred for~~ provided with such treatment, evaluation, or services in a setting appropriate to the clinical needs of the inmate.

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Sec. 7. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY
GENERAL; REPORT TO JUSTICE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

On or before October 15, 2017:

(1) the Secretary of Human Services shall report to the Justice Oversight Committee on how best to provide mental health treatment and services to offenders in the custody of the Department of Corrections, including recommendations on whether those services should be provided by a classified State employee working within the Agency of Human Services, by designated agencies, or by other professionals contracted for professional mental health care services within the Department; and

(2) the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of Human Services, shall report to the Justice Oversight Committee on the resources necessary for the State to comply with the requirements set forth in 13 V.S.A. § 4820(c).

Sec. 8. LEGISLATIVE INTENT; DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS;
USE OF SEGREGATION

It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Department of Corrections continue to house inmates in the least restrictive setting necessary to ensure their own safety as well as the safety of staff and other inmates, and to use segregation only in instances when it serves a specific disciplinary or administrative purpose, pursuant to 28 V.S.A. § 3, and to ensure that inmates

designated as seriously functionally impaired or inmates with a serious mental illness receive the support and rehabilitative services they need.

Sec. 9. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS; DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH; FORENSIC MENTAL HEALTH CENTER;
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR PROVISION OF
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; REPORT TO JOINT
LEGISLATIVE JUSTICE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

On or before July 1, 2017, the Department of Corrections shall:

(1) in accordance with the principles set forth in 18 V.S.A. § 7251, and in consultation with the Department of Health and the designated agencies, develop a plan to create or establish access to a forensic mental health center on or before January 2, 2018 to provide comprehensive assessment, evaluation, and treatment for detainees and inmates with mental illness, while preventing inappropriate segregation;

(2) jointly with the Department of Mental Health, execute a memorandum of understanding to coordinate the provision of mental health treatment and services to inmates and detainees prior to January 2, 2018; and

(3) together with the Department of Mental Health, report on the status of the memorandum of understanding and the forensic mental health center plan to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee.

Sec. 10. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section and Sec. 9 (Department of Corrections; Department of Mental Health; forensic mental health center; memorandum of understanding for provision of mental health services; report to Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee) shall take effect on passage.

(b) Secs. 3 (general definitions), 4 (28 V.S.A. § 701a(b)), 5 (mental health service for inmates; powers and responsibilities of commissioner), 7 (Agency of Human Services; Office of the Attorney General Report to Justice Oversight Committee), and 8 (legislative intent, Department of Corrections; use of segregation) shall take effect on July 1, 2017.

(c) Sec. 6 (mental health service for inmates; powers and responsibilities of Commissioner) shall take effect on January 2, 2018.

(d) Secs. 1 (hearing regarding commitment) and 2 (notice of hearing; procedures) shall take effect on July 1, 2018.